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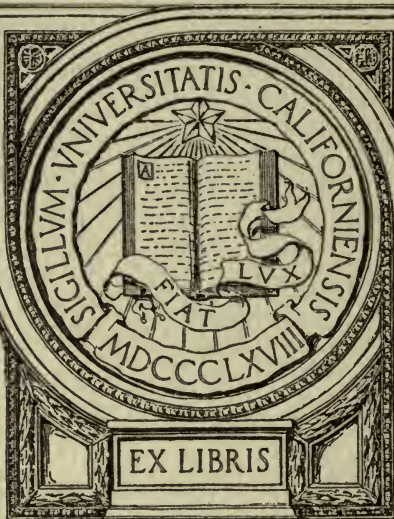
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A LETTER TO AN AMERICAN FRIEND

BY

THE REV. R. J. CAMPBELL, M.A.


Vicar of Christ Church, Westminster;

Sometime Minister of the City Temple, London

NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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A LETTER TO AN AMERICAN FRIEND

AT the moment of writing we have reached the gravest crisis of the world-war. Russia lies prostrate at the feet of the common enemy; the Ukraine has not only made peace but is preparing to receive aid in her struggle against the Bolshevik Government; Roumania is isolated and helpless in presence of the convulsions of her once mighty neighbour, and may be compelled to get the best terms she can from the conqueror, as the Entente Powers are through force of circumstances unable to render her any immediately effective assistance; Poland, Courland, Lithuania, Finland—all are at the disposal of their German military masters. Plainly, for the time being at any rate, Eastern Europe has been swept within the orbit of German military domination, with all that that portentous fact implies.

If the war were to end with this situation in being and likely to be perpetuated, the outlook for the future would be dark indeed; civilisation would be at the mercy of a system more sin-

ister, more menacing, more deadly in relation to all that makes for freedom and true manhood than was the ascendancy of Napoleon at its greatest; there has never been anything like it in the world's history for sheer brutal effectiveness, inspired and directed with a concentration of purpose and a scientific efficiency hitherto unmatched in the New World or the Old. The Baltic and the Black Seas are simply to become German lakes; the resources of the vast region that extends eastward towards the Pacific, and southward towards the Levant on the one side and the Persian Gulf on the other, will be exploited forthwith by the directors of German policy for the gaining of the ultimate ends for which they deliberately set the world in a blaze.

The danger is real, terrible, overwhelming. The immediate hope of averting it rests with the line of brave men who stand in the mud of France and Flanders, awaiting the onslaught of the enemy hordes hastening westwards flushed with triumph and inflamed with confidence in the invincibility of the German sword.

Will they be able to endure the shock? Who knows? They are outnumbered for the first time since the early days of the war; they have been fighting for three and a half years; our own guns, seized from the Russians, are turned against them; every devilish device that ingenuity can suggest

or wickedness employ will be drawn upon to their undoing. We here in England watch, and hope, and pray.

American soldiers are now side by side with the sons of France and Britain in the trenches. They will bear a full and increasing share in the glories and perils of the dreadful hour that is upon us, our cause theirs and their spirit ours; and whatever comes of the conflict in which this comradeship has for the first time been achieved, it would be impossible to lay too much stress upon the far-reaching significance for mankind of the one luminous fact that the Stars and Stripes are for the first time flying upon a European battlefield. What does this mean? How does it come that both Great Britain and America have abandoned their traditional policy and been swept into a colossal war on the Continent of Europe?

Neither country was organised for war, and so far as the mass of the people was concerned, in both countries alike, nothing could have been less expected. The British democracy would not stand for anything like a military adventure on a large scale outside its own borders; no statesman could have persuaded it to do so; and had anyone in this island at the beginning of 1914 declared that the British people at home and beyond the seas would be called upon within the ensuing twelve months to raise an army of six

million men and to pledge all its resources for a Continental struggle, he would have been universally derided, in so far as he was able to obtain a hearing at all. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* to the United States.

What then, we may legitimately ask, has been the issue at stake which was able to effect so great a change, and what were the factors which compelled the older nation to realise it first? In other words, what fundamentally is the cause in which the great democracies of East and West are now engaged together and must stand or fall together?

We here, in the land of the Mother of Parliaments, desire that there should be no misapprehension on this point on the part of our American brothers, and therefore we address you. You are our main hope, the hope of civilisation itself; to many of us the United States are a sort of City of Refuge, the very thought of which sustains us in our darkest trials. Were we to lose in this fearful struggle, and were our ancient homeland to become indeed the vassal of Germany, as General Bernhardt cynically anticipates, it is to the United States that we should turn as the one shining spot on earth whereon a man trained in British traditions would still be able to live a free man's life; we should come to you and make our abode under your flag.

It is not for nothing then that you and we are ranged shoulder to shoulder in a common effort to stem a black tide of evil that is threatening to engulf all that is fairest and most beautiful in human relations. We want you to understand us, to see how essentially we are at one in our aims, to remove any misgivings that might exist in your minds as to our disinterestedness and our readiness to co-operate with you in realising the ideal with which you entered the war. Much that we know about liberty you taught us; much that you know about justice we taught you. We did you wrong in the past, but the spirit in which you resisted and overcame us your fathers bore from our shores to yours. To-day you are no more truly a democracy than we; in some ways we excel you, for there is no land on earth where the value of the individual man is better understood, or his liberty of speech and act more jealously cherished, than in Great Britain. And your mental and spiritual climate is so much like ours that we can breathe your air as though it were native to us, as in a sense indeed it is.

Your President speaks for us all when he defines the ideals for which we are contending in common. Our hearts thrill responsive to his noble utterance; he expresses what we feel as he expresses what you feel, and we remember with pride the stock whence he derives. There is an

ancient church in a little city in a northern county of England whose proudest boast it is that President Wilson's grandfather once ministered therein and spoke the Word of God with authority to his people. Their grandsons and great-grandsons remember that with gladness when the Word of God comes to us across the Atlantic from the lips of the President of the United States to the stricken peoples of Europe to-day.

We were in the war before you because we were next door to the peril. We thought you slow to realise it; some of us said in our haste that you were selfishly taking advantage of it to enrich yourselves in your false security on the other side of the ocean. It was not true; few of us ever believed it true; but there was colour for the accusation, and our hearts grew bitter within us as our blood and treasure poured forth in an ever-growing flood and you showed no sure sign of coming to our aid. Instead, your spokesmen preached to us as though we and our enemies stood on the same moral level and were equally culpable before the bar of history. You have learned better since then, and so have we. You know now that we were fighting your battle as well as our own, and we know that you were not only ready and willing to fight your own but ours once you were convinced that ours was the cause of mankind.

It would have been your turn next if we had gone under, for Prussianism and Americanism are irreconcilable; if, to use President Wilson's words, the world is to be made safe for democracy, Prussianism and its brood of hell must be rendered powerless to do evil henceforth. It took time to bring this home to the American mind, and no wonder, but when you understood the issue for what it really was you instantly outstripped us all in the thoroughness with which you rose to meet it. We are lost in wonder and admiration as we watch what you are doing and note the spirit in which you are doing it; our action has been ineffective in comparison all along, and you have inspired us with new zeal and energy to do what must be done and bear what must be borne till the stern task is accomplished and the sorely stricken world is once more at peace. Truly at last, in well-worn phrase, has a new world been called in to redress the balance of the old. Never in all history has such an amazing and epoch-making reversal of a national tradition been decided upon as that which was yours when you intervened with strong hand in European politics. It was an act of noble disinterestedness, of lofty courage and faith, which has given you the moral leadership of the world.

We are not in a position to reproach you for your slowness in coming to our aid; what else

could we expect? Your liberties were won from us at the point of the sword; your history pivots upon your emancipation from British monarchical control. We are still the greatest imperial power in the world, and to every citizen of the mighty American Commonwealth this is a knotty fact which needs a good deal of explaining when we profess that our cause is the cause of human freedom and brotherhood. Your statesmen, such as Mr. Roosevelt, have been generous enough to say that on the whole we have used our power wisely and well, and that we are the greatest civilising agency among the nations from this point of view; to us as an essentially maritime people has fallen, less by design than by force of circumstances, the task of preserving order and introducing the arts of peace amongst backward races not yet ready for full self-government as understood in the great democracies of four continents.

May we not fairly claim that we have done the work creditably? Where the British flag flies, there tyranny is unknown; justice, tranquillity, and individual liberty are taken for granted; the welfare of those under our charge is not subordinated to any less worthy object. In all this we can boldly challenge comparison with any other Power on earth, and especially with our foes. Let any reasonable man ask himself what would be the fate of Egypt and India if they were left

to themselves or fell under German rule; let any man inquire what they were before we went there, and what they are now.

Still more, let any man from any quarter of the globe pay a visit to any one of the rapidly growing English-speaking communities coming within our imperial system but possessing local autonomy. What will he find? He will find that our only bond of empire is that of the loyalty and devotion of these far-spread children of Great Britain to their motherland. He need not even confine himself to those British territories where our tongue is spoken—ours and yours. South Africa is as free as New York, and has a government composed mainly of representatives of a Dutch-speaking race. Who could have believed it possible that the generalissimo of the Boer forces which fought against us in 1900 should now be Prime Minister of a South African Union whose armies, Dutch and British alike, are fighting on our side? There is no compulsion about it; theirs is a State within a Union not even so closely knit together as that which binds California to New England.

The miracle is easy of explanation; we enjoy no liberty ourselves which is not also theirs. The vast Dominion of Canada, with its boundless potentialities for the future, lies along your border; what have you to say of that? Why should

Canadians trouble to fight for England? Your Monroe doctrine would protect them if there were no British Navy. We possess no authority over them that you do not. They are in no danger from you—if any fact were needed to demonstrate the essential difference between the ideal of government which you and we possess in common and the evil thing against which we are contending for mastery, it would be supplied by those four thousand miles of frontier without a single fort or gunboat in its whole extent—for they and you are brothers with no fell designs upon each other. No, they fight for England because England to the ends of the earth is the centre and symbol of good order broad-based upon the will of the people. If England fell, that principle would be so much the weaker, so much the poorer in the councils of the nations, that not even you could single-handed restore it to its place.

Further, let it be frankly admitted that we are in the war, not simply as you are for disinterested reasons, but also because we had a vital stake in the immediate issue. Nor need we be ashamed of this. The present writer has no sympathy with the view so frequently put forward that Britain drew the sword solely to protect a little independent nation barbarously violated and despoiled by a mighty bullying neighbour. It is true that we did come to the aid of maltreated Belgium;

it is true that it was the cynical invasion of Belgium more than anything else which within twenty-four hours swung British opinion into line with the Government in determining to declare war upon Germany. Had the German General Staff had the sense to leave Belgium alone until their designs against France and Russia had been accomplished, it would have been impossible to secure a united front in Great Britain for a war policy; the rape of Belgium did what not all the warnings of statesmen and publicists could do in making us as one man on the subject of resistance to German aggression.

The same might be said of the Government itself—liberal and pacifist in principle, no member of it more pronouncedly so than the present Prime Minister. It was only because the Government saw that there was no way out, save with dishonour, that the famous ultimatum was issued that threw the resources of the British Empire into the scale against Prussianism. Belgium did it. Belgium did it, chiefly no doubt because of the horror and indignation excited in this country at the spectacle of a weak nation wickedly attacked by a strong one, but also because of what it portended. We saw with startling suddenness that the fate of Belgium was only preliminary to our own. We saw that we could not afford to leave the Prussian master of Belgium nor yet of France.

To stand by and allow France to be crushed would have been equally fatal, though it would have taken us longer to see it. Belgium apart, we had to fight or perish.

In all this we but anticipated the decision to which you later came. You are chivalrously fighting the battle of humanity, not your own; you have risen up as the champion of the independence of small nations against overweening brutal might; you are battling to overthrow the system that threatens these. But a clear perception of this object and a consciousness of being chiefly moved by it do not make it any the less true that if the European democracies were crushed your turn would come next. The Prussian war lords have scarcely taken the trouble to conceal their purpose in this regard. Probably you would have held your own, but at what a risk!

Nor do we forget that when you finally threw in your lot with us you did so mainly because the moral consciousness of the entire American people was revolted by German methods of making war. Like all decent people you found it hard to believe that the tales could be true which reached your shores concerning the cold-blooded application of the deliberate policy of frightfulness to the helpless inhabitants of invaded lands, the cruelties perpetrated upon prisoners of war, the bombardment of open towns, the use of poison gas

and other infamies in the field, and, last but not least, the unrestricted U-boat warfare. Most of all, perhaps, were you influenced by the gradual realisation that the ugly monster which had been set loose in Central Europe was a beast with whom moral considerations did not count. The Prussian military autocracy could not be trusted to keep faith with anybody. Lying, trickery, devilish intrigue were its most ordinary weapons, to be used without scruple against friend and foe alike. The plighted word meant nothing except as a move in the game; it could be repudiated at any moment when it paid to do so, as your diplomatists and statesmen in their dealings with Germany have had to learn over and over again to their cost.

But now that you are with us heart and soul in resistance to the greatest organised evil wherewith human society at large has ever been menaced, let us ask whether there are not still more fundamental issues involved than any of the foregoing, though indissolubly bound up with them. It is only gradually that we ourselves have come to recognise clearly what these are; once up against the issues you have been quicker to envisage them than we. They can best be considered in connection with the general question of the relation of the ideal of democracy to that of individual well-being. The Germanic alliance

stands frankly for autocracy, that of the Entente Powers for democracy. Put in another form, we might say that at its best the Prussian idea is that of paternal government, ours fraternal. Each has its special advantages and its special dangers, but spiritually there can be no question as to which can show the higher results.

The Prussian system has done wonderful things beyond all power of computation. It has not been modelled on Eastern despotism, like that of its Turkish ally, but has consistently sought the immediate welfare of the governed. This much may be ungrudgingly admitted. German imperial administration is uncorrupt, far-seeing, efficient, thorough. It has given to German citizens the best general education in the world and has carried specialisation to the highest point. It has encouraged and rewarded industry and ability with no niggard hand; it has fostered research, enterprise, trade and commerce to a degree unknown in other countries. It has shown the rest of the world what organisation could do in the development of the internal and external resources of the State. Alone among the non-popular forms of government which have survived from the Middle Ages it has gone far to justify itself by results; it has undoubtedly placed the German people in possession of a wealth and prosperity which could hardly have been won otherwise in the same

time, and it is this beyond doubt which has rendered Kaiserism and its adjuncts acceptable to the great mass of the German-speaking subjects of William the Second. German imperialism is the only autocracy that can offer a serious challenge to democratic ideals; it has succeeded.

But at what a price! No virile race on God's earth is kept in political tutelage like the German people. They have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage; they were nearer to liberty of soul in 1848, when they all but overthrew monarchy, than they are to-day. They do not understand how free nations feel in relation to life; they are content to be told what to do and say, to have restrictions placed upon their freedom of action in a thousand ways which would be utterly intolerable to any free-spirited folk. They are accustomed to be regulated, bullied, moved about like pawns by a master hand. They do not resent it; they are accustomed to it, trained in it, fashioned by it; they see what great things this paternal authority has done for them and judge it accordingly. If it failed them they would rebel, but it has not failed—yet; on the contrary, it has been a glittering success, and it suits them.

There is very little to show for the belief entertained in some quarters that the German public disapproves the ruthless policy of its rulers. The children of the men who fought the vic-

torious campaign of 1870 have been brought up to breathe the very air of militarism; the swaggering Prussian officer is their ideal of manhood; they have been made hard, aggressive, morally insensitive. Nothing will deliver them from this obsession of an evil spirit but the collapse of the system that fostered it, and that collapse can only come about by the bitter experience of defeat in the field. Let it once be proved that the German imperial military organisation is not invincible against the rest of the world in arms and its doom is sealed.

This will be hard to accomplish, for autocracy has this initial advantage over democracy, that it can focus its strength more quickly and thoroughly to a given end. The thesis of De Tocqueville, that democracy is the most difficult and exacting of all forms of government because it demands more from the individual citizen, is well illustrated in this war. Democracy as a principle is no magic passport to well-being, for everything depends on the spirit in which it is worked. Its main reliance is not on authority backed by force nor on governmental machinery, but on the wisdom and disciplined self-restraint of its members. The individual is summoned to do his thinking for himself, and to decide along with his fellows the crucial issues of State policy. The national destiny is committed to his hands, to make or mar.

Good government, like all other moral values, can be enjoyed by him only at the cost of unceasing vigilance. In complex questions the initiative may have to come from the executive, but the executive is itself elected, and its character is therefore determined by the prevailing standards of social and political righteousness. The admirations and preferences of the individual are mirrored in the type of leader that he chooses to place in power.

This has two consequences. First, democracy, founding its political creed on belief in the moral resources of the individual citizen, must regard as all-important the tasks of education, religious, moral, and social. Secondly, the requirements of statesmanship in a democracy are greater, not less, than in an autocracy. In proportion as the aims are higher and wider, the problems are more complex and difficult. Though the elected rulers have less independent power, they have the more onerous task of enlightening public opinion and of enlisting its support in all their projects. Democracy forbids the drawing of any Bismarckian distinction between the morality of the individual and the morality of the State. Such a distinction is always based on the contention that the ruler is a trustee and has therefore no right to practise at the expense of his Fatherland the Christian virtues of forbearance and justice towards other

States. In democracy, on all crucial questions of international as of national policy, the individual citizens decide; and, as they are disposing of themselves in relation to others, they are subject to the same moral laws as in their individual dealings between man and man. They can confer on their representatives no right to do for the State what their conscience would forbid them to do in their own private interests.

The first condition of such democratic government is the liberty of the individual. The passion for liberty is equally strong in Britain and in America. Political liberty for both dates from Magna Charta, and they share in common the body of English Common Law. Trusting to moral rather than material forces, to men rather than to institutions, democracy cannot be preached as a merely political programme or as a panacea: it is an ideal of life. For the same reason it is missionary and propagandist; it imposes duties upon the individual citizen in relation to the internal welfare of other political communities than his own.

It was the recognition of this principle that compelled the United States to draw the sword for the deliverance of Cuba, and a thousandfold more is it the recognition of this principle which justifies, nay, demands, her intervention on a vaster field to-day. Though the primary duties

of the individual are to the State to which he belongs, they rest on a basis that renders them applicable to all mankind. Miss Cavell's noble utterance in the face of a violent death, "Patriotism is not enough," is not only a statement of the first principle of Christianity but of that which is now at stake in this colossal struggle of the nations; it is that which inspires the immortal message of President Wilson, a prophet among statesmen, that America should count among the things she will fight for "the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience." Democracy contains the promise of the only internationalism worth while—support of other communities in proportion as they represent the same ideal or through tyranny are prevented from pursuing it.

Thus democracy stands for the belief that the problem of statesmanship is as far as it goes identical with that of religion, the saving of the soul of man both in its individual and its social aspects. It relies on the spirit, and on other forces only in proportion as they serve its ultimate aim. By this standard it tests its political institutions; and by this standard it must also determine the issues of war and peace.

This, and nothing less than this, is what is at stake in the world to-day. Two ideals of living, two spiritual creeds, two views of human worth

and destiny confront each other on the battlefield. And just as in your War of Independence against us by which you won your national autonomy, and your later Civil War by which the one gap in your Constitution was filled, so now to-day you are fighting for the principle on which alone true and lasting spiritual manhood can be built. Lincoln's words on the field of Gettysburg are even more patently and universally applicable to the present world-war and your part in it than to the struggle in which you were then engaged: "We here highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain, that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth." Yours is the unique and unspeakable privilege of being able to say that as a nation you have never drawn the sword for any other principle. May this be the last time you will need to vindicate it, as indeed it shall, if only we are unitedly and sufficiently great of soul to persevere to the full attainment of the glorious end we have set before us.

The tragedies of the war have stirred to its depths the conscience of the entire civilised world and have created a universal determination that no opportunity shall be left when the settlement comes for any renewal of the unimaginable calamities we are now called upon to endure. The outstand-

ing abuses of the old order of things—the old secret diplomacy and non-moral bargaining regardless of the wishes of the inhabitants of the territories handed over by treaty to this Power or that—must be swept utterly away. Let all international dealing be frank and open; it is our greatest safeguard. Let the glaring wrongs created by past wars be drastically remedied—the Alsace-Lorraine question, the dismemberment of Poland, the cruel maltreatment of Armenia, to name only a few. Most of all, statesmanship is now ripe for the establishment of a League of Nations with the one great object of maintaining peace and coercing any Power that attempts to break it. The main hope of such a League of Nations is that America should take the lead therein; it would give confidence to every small nation throughout the world, for no one outside Germany could question the disinterestedness of the United States in this grave matter. To Great Britain it would be sufficient to see her own ideals thus represented and enforced by the most powerful nation on earth.

The war has led directly to a much closer practical union of Great Britain with all the free self-governing British dominions throughout the world, a union which in the near future will be still more complete. May comradeship in arms lead to a similar permanent understanding between Great

Britain and the United States! Why not? Why not an international citizenship of the two great branches of the English-speaking race? What is to hinder it? What old-time prejudice can we remove, what institution can we reform so as to bring it into line with yours? In some respects yours would do well to come into line with ours—but that we need not discuss.

Is there anything in our methods of government anywhere which offends American sentiment or is inconsistent with American ideals? Does Ireland block the way, for instance, as some of your publicists tell us? We beg you to make closer acquaintance with the facts before you pass judgment. Whatever may be true of ages past, the British electorate is only too willing to deal justly and fairly with Ireland. Nay, we might even go so far as to trust President Wilson to settle the whole Irish question for us if he would undertake it; but would he? He would soon find, if he does not know already, that it is not England but Ireland herself that is disunited on this question and cannot arrive at agreement. England will do anything that Ireland wants if Ireland can only make up her mind as to what she really does want. That is the real problem, and there is no other.

In the fearful time through which the world is passing it is not Ireland that is having to suffer,

but England, Scotland, and Wales, Canada, Australia, South Africa. Leave one or two corners of Ireland out of count and the contrast with the sister kingdom is striking. One could not do better than put it to you to say what proportionate part Ireland is bearing in this war for the deliverance of mankind from an ancient bondage.

It is long since Great Britain came to recognise that she could not isolate herself from the rest of the world. Now America too has realised that she can no longer limit the sphere of her interest to the Western Hemisphere, but must assume a full responsibility with the rest of civilisation for the shaping of the future of the undivided human race. That future is in the balance at this moment, and but a little may tip the scales for or against the sane and honest ideals of liberty and justice, good comradeship and self-respect, mutual trust and the will to universal happiness. Upon the action of the three great democracies of the world, America, France, and Great Britain, more than upon all other facts and forces put together, under God the decision waits.

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